

Alla tiders språk

En vänskrift till Gertrud Pettersson november 1999

Denna bok är en hyllning till Gertrud Pettersson när hon slutar som universitetslektor efter många års anställning vid institutionen för nordiska språk i Lund. Artiklarna spänner över ett vitt fält och anknyter till de intresseområden som Lundanordisterna representerar, såsom grammatik, språkinlärning, semantik, språksociologi, textforskning, ord- och namnforskning. Bland artiklarna på textforskningens område ingår också samtalsanalys och studier av förhållandet mellan text och bild. Många av bokens bidrag har ett historiskt perspektiv.

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Case and Argument Structure of some Loan Verbs in 15th Century Icelandic

Jóhanna Barðdal

1 Introduction

In a recent study (Barðdal 1999a) of the syntactic behaviour of novel verbs in modern Icelandic, i.e. their behaviour regarding argument structure and morphological case, three mechanisms were discovered for them to acquire argument structure: via Cluster Attraction, Isolate Attraction and Argument Structure Borrowing.¹ The first two are similar in that the novel verb attaches to an argument structure already available in the language, with the difference that in the former case it attaches to a cluster of verbs with a similar meaning and the same argument structure, while in the latter case there only seems to be one verb or predicate that functions as a model for the novel verb, and not a whole cluster of verbs. The third alternative, Argument Structure Borrowing, implies that a verb is borrowed from a source language together with the argument structure of the source language. Compare the following examples of novel verbs associated with Cluster Attraction, Isolate Attraction and Argument Structure Borrowing, respectively (from Barðdal 1999a):

- (1) a. *netast á* 'write to each other on the internet'
 to net+st on
- b. *dona uppi* 'be forgotten'
 to dawn up
- c. *fríka út* 'freak out'
 to freak out

The novel particle verb *netast á* is only one of many verbs occurring in the construction [V+st á], such as, *skrifast á* 'write to each other', *drekkast á* 'drink to each other', *kallast á* 'scream to each other' and *kankast á* 'tease each other'. The example in (1b) *dona uppi* is formed exactly parallel to *daga uppi* with the same meaning, with the English equivalent to *daga* being *dawn*. Finally, *fríka*

¹ I am indebted to Veturlíði Óskarsson for giving me an unpublished version of his work. I want to thank Ute Bohnacker and Christer Platzack for extensive comments. I am also grateful to the audience at the "Forskarseminar" in Lund 19 May 1999, where I have presented this work. This research is supported in part by a grant from The Icelandic Research Fund for Graduate Students.

út, seems to have the same argument structure as its English counterpart (for further examples see Barðdal 1999a). The nominal arguments of novel verbs then get their morphological case from the construction the verb occurs in.

The results of this study constitute a problem for recent theories of productivity. According to Bybee (1985:132-133), a prerequisite for a morpheme to be productive is that it has high type frequency and not high token frequency. This idea has been further developed by Goldberg (1995:134-135) for argument structure constructions. The difference between type frequency and token frequency can be illustrated with the following example: If a frequency word count reveals that a certain verb is extremely common in a huge sample of texts then that verb can be said to have a high token frequency, i.e. that particular verb is very common. But we wouldn't say that its argument structure is productive even though it is very common since it always occurs with the same lexical item. If, on the other hand, this imaginary frequency word count reveals that 95 % of all the most frequent verbs in the sample have the same argument structure then we can assume this particular argument structure construction to have a high type frequency, since it appears with so many verbs, and should therefore attract novel lexical items.

The process of Isolate Attraction is actually predicted by Bybee's and Goldberg's assumptions on productivity not to exist, since Isolate Attraction does not require high type frequency. Their theory, on the other hand, does not say anything about Argument Structure Borrowing. It is of course possible to argue that the distinction between type and token frequency is designed to only deal with native word formation and not with borrowed verbs. Before we make such claims we should be wise to do some more research in the field. In what follows, I will therefore carry out a small study of loan verbs in 15th century Icelandic. I will begin with a discussion of the material in its socio-cultural context (section 2), proceed from there to the actual verbs and their argument structure constructions, as presented in the material (section 3). There I will also discuss the possible sources of the argument structures, and other theoretical explanations applicable to the data. Finally I will close the paper with a discussion of the results and their theoretical implications; first on theories of productivity, second on theories of language contact, and finally on theories of the break down of the morphological case system in Scandinavian (section 4).

2 Historical Background

Waves of foreign words have swept over the Atlantic to Iceland, from the beginning of nordic settlement there until modern times (see Óskarsson (in

prep:5-6)).² One such wave came through and left its trace on the written sources in the 15th century. It has its origin in socio-cultural changes in Scandinavia and Northern Europe, a change from an agricultural society to a more trade oriented society, where the Germans gradually gained the upper hand in the sea-trade, over other Germanic nations such as the Frisians, the English and the Dutch. These loan words are mostly Middle Low German in origin, but reached Iceland first via Norwegian and later via Danish intermediates, and are therefore formally Norwegian and Danish loans.

The loan words have been studied by Óskarsson (1997, 1998 and in prep). His study is confined to Icelandic diplomas written in the 15th century. Only philologically correct editions were used (see Óskarsson (in prep) for further information and criteria). The diplomas represent a genre typical of the administrative language. They document the official or bureaucratic language of that time. The loan words are therefore not so-called cultural or neutral loan words, which have come about because of a gap in the vocabulary, on the contrary, they replace already existing native words, they are therefore either typical prestige loans, or they have been borrowed because they have repeatedly appeared in the same context. Both lexical transfers and translation loans were included.

Even though the diplomas belong to a genre typical of the official and administrative language, they are still written in a style which contains colloquial utterances. The vocabulary is a mixture of neutral written language, with strong colloquial features, and administrative jargon, free from the magnificence of contemporary translated (and non-translated) fiction. A note of warning though: the language of the diplomas is probably not typical of the spoken Icelandic of the common people in the 15th century, since the diplomas, as a genre, are comparable with today's official documents. The loan verbs in them can nevertheless be used as a testimony of how loan verbs are integrated into the structure of a recipient language.

3 The Data

Óskarsson's list of loan words (1997) contains 103 verbs. Due to space limitations I will only discuss a handful of examples. Those were chosen partly because they exemplify the adjustment mechanisms discussed in section 1 above and in Barðdal (1999a), partly because they were interesting from the point of view of morphological case, and partly to present as many argument structure constructions as possible. An exhaustive study of all the verbs in the material

² The overview in this section is based on Óskarsson (1998 and in prep).

will, however, have to await a better time. The verbs, selected for investigation, are the following ones:

- (2) *bevísa*, *bívísa* 'prove, confirm'
bífala, *bífela* '(1) order, command (2) entrust'
bíhaga 'suit, fit'
bíhalda 'keep'
bírykta 'spread lies about sby'
bítala 'pay'
forljúga 'lie to sby'
forsvara 'defend'
hasta '(1) be in a hurry (2) chase away'
klaga 'complain'
regera 'rule, govern'
ruska 'push'
straffa 'complain, appeal against'
tilheyra 'belong'
úttefa 'issue'
péna 'serve'

Since I am not a speaker of 15th century Icelandic I will not pretend that I have access to either the "construction" or the vocabulary of that time. I do, of course, have access to the part of the vocabulary which is shared by 15th century Icelandic, Old Icelandic and modern Icelandic. But because of this possible knowledge gap of mine I will not distinguish between Cluster Attraction and Isolate Attraction in the following discussion. I will only use the notions of Argument Structure Attraction and Argument Structure Borrowing, where the former refers to the case where a loan verb acquires its argument structure construction from the recipient language, and the latter term refers to the case where a loan verb is borrowed together with its argument structure construction, from the source language.

During the period (15th Century), in which our loan verbs were borrowed into Icelandic, the morphological case distinction had already disappeared in Danish (Ringgård 1986). The pronominal distinction between nominative and accusative (non-nominative) did exist though, and it is reasonable to assume that it would be interpreted as morphological nominative and accusative, by an Icelandic speaker. I will now discuss each verb in turn:

bevísa: The examples with *bevísa* in Óskarsson (1997) illustrate that this verb can be constructed with a nominative subject, an object and a clause:

- (3) a. kann sýgurður ath *bíjvísa* hvar peningarner erv nidurkomner [...]
 'can Sigurður prove where the money is situated [...]'
DI V(1472) 672¹² (nr. 597)
 b. var þat ok *bíjvisad* af tveimur dandi monnum [...]
 'it was also proven by two fine men [...]'
DI VI (1483) 489³ (nr. 434)

It is clear that *bevísa* behaves like its Old and modern Icelandic counterpart *sanna*.³ At the same time the use of *bevísa* in our examples does not differ particularly from the use of this verb in Old Danish.⁴

bífala: The verb *bífala* is constructed either as *skipa* and *bjóða* 'command' with a dative object (4a), or as *fela e-ð e-m í vald* 'put sth in sby's power' (entrust sby with sth) (4b):

- (4) a. Biodum vær eireki biarnasyni og *bijfaulum* honum vpp a vorra vegna ad [...]
 'we order Eiríkur Bjarnason and command him (dat), on our behalf to [...]'
DI VII (*1495>apogr^x) 277¹⁶ (nr. 322)
 b. hier med *bifala* eg ydr gudi j ualld ok hans modur [...]
 'hereby I entrust god (dat) and his mother with you (acc) [...]'
IslDipl ([c1450]) 410¹⁶ (nr. 337)

The use of *bífala* (1) here also coincides with its use in Old Danish, apart from the dative case in (4a), while *bífala* (2) is not found amongst the Old Danish examples I have looked at. Similar, though not identical, examples are found in Old Swedish.⁵ Since both examples contain a dative, not found in contemporary Danish, we have to assume that at least the morphological case of the datives has its origin in the Icelandic equivalent constructions.

bíhaga: This verb is always constructed impersonally in our material, with a dative subject (5a),⁶ just like its Old and modern Icelandic counterpart *henta*. There is one example with accusative, though (5b):

- (5) a. [...] sem adr nefndri halldorv *bihagati* at taka
 '[...] as before mentioned Halldóra (dat) suited to take'
IslDipl (1442) 354¹² (nr. 287)
 b. huort sem mig *bihagar* betr vti ad læta
 'whether or not it suits me (acc) better to give'
IslDipl (1434) 317¹² (nr. 250)

Since this example is the only one with accusative and not dative in our material, and since all the examples of *bíhaga* in the 16th century are also constructed with dative (see Westergård-Nielsen 1946), I will assume that the dative is the "correct" case of the subject of this verb, and that the accusative most likely is a direct lexical transfer from Danish.⁷ It is also interesting that

³ All statements about Old Icelandic are based on information and examples in Fritzner (1896).

⁴ All statements about Old Danish are based on information and examples in Kalkar (1886-1892).

⁵ All statements about Old Swedish are based on information and examples in Söderwall (1884-1918).

⁶ See Barðdal (1997, 1998 and 1999b) and the references there on the debate of the syntactic status of these NPs.

⁷ All statements on 16th century Icelandic are based on examples in Westergård-Nielsen (1946).

the other use of *bíhaga* 'please' (with the opposite order of the arguments), which we find in Danish is not found in Icelandic.

bíhalda: We have two examples of *bíhalda* in our material:

- (6) a. [...] eda hvortt hann mætti *bíhallda* iordina rettliga efter kavppi sinv
'[...] or whether he could keep the land (acc) rightfully after his trading'
DI V (1465) 455²³ (nr. 402)
- b. ec uil sialf hafa bruka og *bíhallda* allt þetta goz jarder oc lausa aura [...]
'I myself want to have, use and keep all the goods, land and money (acc) [...]'
DI VII (*1495>tr 1497) 245¹⁸ (nr. 297)

The Icelandic cognate of *bíhalda*, i.e. *halda*, can assign both accusative and dative to its object. The construction with the dative is definitely more common both in Old and modern Icelandic, and there is only a subtle difference in meaning; *halda+dat* means to keep something in general, while *halda+acc* is used about keeping a house or a home or something of that kind. The latter interpretation is not particularly likely in the examples in (6) (compare the glosses), and since all examples of *bíhalda*, from the 16th century (apart from one example which is a slavish translation according to Westergård-Nielsen (1946)), are with a dative, it is reasonable to assume that the accusative here is a direct transfer from Old Danish.

bírykta: There is only one example with *bírykta* in the material:

- (7) [...] viliande suo *bírykta* honum firir kongenvm ok odrum dandimonnum vtanlandz
'[...] wanting so much to defame him (dat) amongst the king and other fine men abroad'
DI VI (1481) 390¹⁹ (nr. 355)

In Old Danish *bírykta* is constructed either transitively or as a copula construction with a participle (or an adjective), like 'he is known'. The copula construction is not attested in our material but the transitive construction is. The morphological case of the object is dative, which is in accordance with the case assignment of the Old and modern Icelandic *hallmæla*, *fyrirmæla*, *bölva* and *blóta* 'speak evil about sb'.

bítala: All the examples of *bítala* are intransitive, apart from one with an instrumental/theme object (8a) and another with a recipient object (8b):

- (8) a. at magnus skyldi *bítala* peninga firir jordina [...]
'that Magnús should pay money (acc) for the land [...]'
DI V (1471) 621²³ (nr. 561)
- b. [...] at *bítala* mig xx hundrvt edur minom brodur gudna
'[...] to pay me (acc) xx hundred or my brother Guðni (dat)'
DI VII (1497) 371¹⁶ (nr. 394)

The accusative of the theme in (8a) is in accordance with both Old and modern Icelandic. The case of the recipient object in (8b) is strange, though; first the 1.p.pronoun is accusative but the conjoined full NP is dative. Since all other verbs of this type, such as *gjalda*, *selja*, *gefa*, *afhenda* ('pay, give, deliver'), select a dative for its recipient object, it seems reasonable that the dative of the conjoined NP is a regular correct dative, while the accusative of the pronoun may well be a lexical transfer from the Danish construction.

forljúga: This verb, *forljúga*, is only documented in Kalkar (1886-1892) and Söderwall (1884-1918) in a copula construction with the participle used as an adjective (*forlwen*, *forløjet*). That differs from the Icelandic example in our material:

- (9) hann og hans fylgiarar villdu giarna *forliuga* oss
'he and his followers were eager to lie to us (acc)' *DI V* (1471) 614⁸ (nr. 555)

Since the attested construction is absent from the Old Danish and Old Swedish dictionaries, they cannot testify about a possible transitive construction, borrowed into 15th century Icelandic. Middle High German, on the other hand, has *verlügen* (or *verliegen*) occurring transitively with an accusative object (Grimm and Grimm 1854).

The Old and modern Icelandic cognate of *forljúga*, i.e. *ljúga* is constructed with a prepositional phrase *at+dat* or *um+acc*. Our only example of *forljúga* from 16th century Icelandic has the same argument structure as our 15th century example (but with a clear-cut accusative). It therefore seems reasonable to assume that the argument structure was borrowed into Icelandic together with the stem and the meaning of the verb.

forsvara: The loan verb *forsvara* seems to behave exactly like its Old and modern Icelandic counterpart *verja*, with an accusative object:

- (10) a. [...] ath *forsuara* þik firir þetta mal er vj berum til þín
'[...] to defend yourself (acc) in this case, in which you are the accused'
DI V (1473) 689¹⁷ (nr. 612)
- b. [...] at *forsvara* sitt mall med profwm [...]
'[...] to defend his case (acc) with evidence [...]'
DI VII (1493) 193²⁷ (nr. 258)

It also conforms to its use in Danish, and 16th century Icelandic.

hasta: Our material has *hasta* with two meanings, both documented in Danish:

- (11) a. sumleger af fylgiorum hrafns [...] *hostudu* biskupen burtt [...]
'some of Hrafn's followers [...] chased the bishop (acc) away [...]'
DI VI (1481) 380²⁵ (nr. 347)

- b. *hastar* mic ecki stort at gefa þar storyrdia huat sem mer picki [...]
 'I (acc) am not in a big hurry to say big words about this, whatever I feel [...]'
DI V ([1467]) 485¹⁷ (nr. 432)

The argument structure of the meaning in (11a) is in accordance with the Icelandic *reka burt*, *hrekja burt*, *fæla burt*, which also select an accusative object, while (11b) is strange. Firstly, note that the Danish equivalent selects a nominative human subject and a reflexive object. That interpretation is possible here, we would only have to assume an elliptic personal subject. What speaks for that interpretation is the fact that all examples of *hasta* in the 16th century are constructed in that way. What speaks against it is the lack of agreement of the verb form (*hastar* instead of *hasta*). The other possibility is that *hasta* is here constructed impersonally like its Old and modern Icelandic counterpart, *liggja á* 'be in a hurry', but with an accusative instead of a dative. Since the impersonal use of *hasta*, with an accusative, is documented in Old Swedish, it seems reasonable to assume Argument Structure Borrowing, since the construction presumably also existed in Danish, in spite of lack of documentation.

klaga: The two examples of *klaga* are the following:

- (12) a. [...] og *klagadi* fyrir biskupenvm. ath honum þætti kirkian [...]
 '[...] and complained to the bishop that he felt that the church [...]'
DI VII (1495) 279³ (nr. 324)
- b. [...] sem biorn þolleifson *klagadi* til biarna
 '[...] which Björn Þorleifsson complained about with Björn'
DI VII (1499) 430³ (nr. 446)

The former example is in accordance with the Danish *klage for*, attested in Old Danish. It is also attested in 16th century Icelandic. It should be noticed, though, that it is also equivalent with the Icelandic (*á*)*kæra fyrir*.

regera: From the five examples in our material three are constructed with an (accusative) object:

- (13) a. biskup olaf hefer [...] ok at ollu sitt biskupsdæmi *regerat* [...]
 'Bishop Olaf has [...] in every aspect ruled his bishopdome (acc) [...]'
DI VI (1481) 390²⁷ (nr. 355)
- b. [...] og hier epter æfínnliga halda og *regera* fyrr nefndan stad og klaustur
 '[...] and from now on always to keep and rule the before mentioned place and closter (acc)'
DI VII (1496) 303⁶ (nr. 342)

Considering the fact that the Old and modern Icelandic counterparts of *regera*, i.e. *stjórna*, *stýra* and *ráða* all assign dative to their objects, it becomes strange that *regera* selects accusative. This can mean that either the argument structure is borrowed from Danish, or that *regera* here is associated not with *stýra*, *stjórna* and *ráða*, but rather with verbs as *halda* 'keep' as in (13b), which select accusative. Consider the following example:

- (14) Dæmdvm vær [...] biorn gvðinason lavgliga hafa *isetz* og matt *j sitia* og mega *j sitia* frammvegis *hafa* og *hallda byggja* og *bæla rada* og *riegiera* allan opt skrifadan arf [...]
 'We judged that [...] Björn Guðnason lawfully possessed and could possess and could possess in the future, had and kept, built and rented out, governed and ruled all of the frequently described inheritance (acc) [...]'
DI VII (1497) 349⁹ (nr. 382)

Here we have *regera* conjoined with *ísitja*, *hafa*, *halda*, *byggja*, and *bæla* which all assign accusative to their objects. It is of course impossible to know which of these verbs is the real case assigner.

All the examples of *regera* in 16th century Icelandic have *regera* assigning accusative (apart from one intransitive example). What is also noteworthy is the fact that the 16th century examples seem to be direct translations from either a Danish or a German text. It therefore does not seem unreasonable to assume that the argument structure could be borrowed from Danish.

ruska: This verb always assigns dative to its argument, as its Old and modern Icelandic counterparts *ýta*, *hrinda* and *rykkja*. These are for instance the following:

- (15) a. greip sira jon palson til min ok *rvskade* mier svo ek hvrvade vndan [...]
 'reverend Jón Pálsson grabbed me and pushed me (dat) so that I fell back [...]'
DI V (1465) 427¹³ (nr. 375)
- b. firirbaud ek havnm ad *rvska* mier eda legia hendur æ mig
 'I forbid him to push me (dat) or hit me' *DI V* (1465) 427¹⁵ (nr. 375)

The equivalent verb *ruske* in Danish does not assign dative to its argument since the dative had already disappeared at the time. Also, *ruske* often selects a preposition *op* 'up' in Danish. It therefore seems clear that here we have an example of Argument Structure Attraction.

straffa: There is only one example with *straffa* 'appeal against' in our material:

- (16) enn ef nockur leikman vill *straffa* vora doma edur giorninga [...]
 'but if any layman wants to appeal against our verdict or actions (acc) [...]'
DI V (1474) 753²⁷ (nr. 667)

Since this argument structure, with a nominative subject and an accusative object, is not found with a verb of this meaning in Icelandic, it seems that both the stem and its argument structure, together with the meaning of the simple verb, have been borrowed from Danish. The equivalent modern Icelandic counterpart would be *áfrýja* with dative, while the Old Icelandic counterpart would be *skjóta e-u áfram*, with a dative (also current in modern Icelandic), or perhaps *frýja á e-n*.

tilheyra: There are four examples of *tilheyra* in our material, with a beneficiary object. Of these, three have the beneficiary in dative while one has it in accusative:

- (17) a. [...] þa fædu sem gaumlum dandi manni *til heýrer* ok [...] ' [...] the food which belongs to a fine old man (dat) and [...] ' *DI VI (1489) 655²⁵ (nr. 585)*
- b. med [...] ollum þeim rett og renntu sem kongdominn ok mig *tilheyra* 'with [...] all the right and interest which belong to the kingdom and me (acc)' *DI VI (*1485>apogr*) 545¹⁶ (nr. 487)*

tilheyra selects accusative in Old Danish, while its Icelandic cognate *heyra til* selects a dative in modern Icelandic and both dative and genitive in Old Icelandic. Considering the fact that all examples with *tilheyra* from the 16th century have a dative benefactive, I assume that the dative originates in the argument structure of *heyra til*, while the example with the accusative is an example of Argument Structure Borrowing.

útgefa: Our examples are of various kinds. Some have accusative theme objects (a), while others have a dative beneficiary (b):

- (18) a. huort hann hefði nökut bref *utgefit* med sinu innsigli 'whether he had issued any diplomas (acc) with his seal' *DI V (*1461>apogr*) 239¹⁵ (nr. 226)*
- b. bref sem [...] noregx kongar haufðu *ut gefit* heilagre hola kirkiu ok [...] 'a diploma which [...] the kings of Norway had issued to the whole H (dat) and [...]' *DI VI (1481) 379²³ (nr. 347)*
- c. epter þui brefi sem minn nadvig herra kong kristiern *gaf* mig *uth* hans vegna 'following the diploma, which my merciful sir king Kristján issued to me (acc), on his behalf' *DI V (*1459>tr 1479) 187⁵ (nr. 173)*

In this last example, the beneficiary is in the accusative. But this is our only example of accusative, while three other examples are with a dative. It seems reasonable to assume that in these three examples it is the cognate verb *give* which adds the argument structure, while in (18c) it is the Danish verb which adds it.

þéna: The Old and modern Icelandic cognate of *þéna*, i.e. *þjóna* always selects a dative for its beneficiary. The only example of *þéna* from the 15th century contains an accusative:

- (19) [...] er hann hefur mig *þeint* uel ok dygiliga vpp áá.x. vetur [...] ' [...] since he has served me (acc) loyally for ten years [...]' *DI V (1451) 82²¹ (nr. 71)*

Since all examples with *þéna* in 16th century Icelandic contain a dative beneficiary and not an accusative one, I assume that (19) is an example of Argument Structure Borrowing from Danish.

The results of this study can be summarized in the following table:

Table 1

Attraction	Borrowing	Either
		bevísa
bífala (1)(2) bíhaga	bíhaga bíhalda	
bíryckta bícala	bícala forljúga	
	hasta (1)	forsvara hasta (2) klaga
	regera	
ruska		
tilheyra útgefa	straffa tilheyra útgefa þéna	

Notes: A schematic overview of loan verbs according to the assumed origin of their argument structures.

In Table 1 above, in the column, *Either*, I have put those verbs which have an argument structure which is compatible with both Argument Structure Attraction and Argument Structure Borrowing, and in which cases it is impossible to know which of the mechanisms has applied. All other verbs fit either with *Attraction* or *Borrowing*, depending on the evidence discussed above.

There are four verbs which I have put in two columns: *bíhaga*, *bícala*, *tilheyra* and *útgefa*. This I have done since there is evidence for both mechanisms having applied to them. *bíhaga* is impersonally constructed, with a dative in most cases as its Icelandic counterpart *henta*, while one example is constructed with an accusative, like in Danish. The same holds for *bícala*, it has a dative beneficiary like *gjalda*, *selja*, *afhenda* and *gefa*. There is one example though with an accusative beneficiary, like in Danish. The same is true for *tilheyra* and *útgefa*. One verb, *hasta*, both fits with *Borrowing* and *Either*, since *hasta* (1) is clearly borrowed together with its argument structure from Danish (or Scandinavian), while *hasta* (2) can either be borrowed together with its argu-

ment structure or it can get its argument structure from Icelandic verbs with the same meaning.

The results of this investigation indicate that loan verbs acquire their argument structures in exactly the same way in 15th century Icelandic as in modern Icelandic (see Barðdal 1999a), i.e. the mechanisms discovered for novel verbs in modern Icelandic were also at work in 15th century Icelandic. These mechanisms are Cluster Attraction, Isolate Attraction and Argument Structure Borrowing. In this study, though, I have used a simplified version of the mechanisms, since I have subsumed Cluster Attraction and Isolate Attraction in the category Argument Structure Attraction.

Even though my hypothesis (developed within the framework of Goldberg's *Construction Grammar* (1995)), that it is the construction which functions as a case and argument structure assigner, is compatible with these results, other approaches might turn out to be compatible as well.

Let us consider, for a moment, the LFG-influenced approach of Zaenen, Maling and Thráinsson (1985) to morphological case in Icelandic (compatible with the Principle and Parameters approach of, for instance, Falk (1997)). They argue for structural case; namely nominative and accusative, to be assigned on the basis of the structural positions, and they also argue for idiosyncratic (lexical) case, which is assigned to goal arguments, on the basis of thematic roles. Within such an approach, the examples of the morphological case marking of the verbs above would not be considered to have anything to do with verbs already existing in the language, nor with verbs or argument structures of verbs belonging to other languages than Icelandic. Rather, all the examples above of nominative subjects and accusative objects would be considered as evidence for structural case assignment and all the examples of dative arguments would be considered as thematic (or lexical/idiosyncratic) case assignment to experiencers and beneficiaries. That description does not hold for the material presented above. According to this generative view, we would not expect ordinary theme objects to get dative case, since that would not be thematic case marking. That would be idiosyncratic case marking, and by definition we wouldn't expect it to be productive. Two such examples actually exist in our data, namely with the verbs *bírykta* 'defame' and *ruska* 'push', repeated here for the sake of convenience:

- (7) [...] viliande suo *bjryckta* honum firir kongenvm ok odrum dandimonnum vtanlandz
'[...] wanting so much to defame him (dat) amongst the king and other fine men
abroad' *DI VI* (1481) 390¹⁹ (nr. 355)

- (15) a. greip sira jon palson til min ok *rvskade* mier svo ek hrvvade vndan [...]
'reverend Jón Pálsson grabbed me and pushed me (dat) so that I fell back
[...]' *DI V* (1465) 427¹³ (nr. 375)
b. firirbaud ek havnm ad *rvska* mier eda legia hendur æmig
'I forbid him to push me (dat) or hit me' *DI V* (1465) 427¹⁵ (nr. 375)

I have argued above that the dative of the object of *bírykta* is due to similar verbs, such as *hallmæla*, *fyrirmæla*, *bölva*, *blóta*, and that the object of *ruska* is due to verbs like *yta*, *hrinda* and *rykkja* which also select a dative theme object in Icelandic. These cannot be explained by generative approaches on morphological case. A Construction Grammar approach is more successful in that respect.

I have shown here that the descriptive model, designed in Barðdal (1999a), for novel verbs and their behaviour regarding morphological case and argument structure, can easily be applied to similar data from other periods of the Icelandic language. The real truth about the origin of the argument structure of the loan verbs discussed above can, of course, not be decided upon. We can only speculate on that. Our analysis, though, is fully compatible with the data, and superior to other case theories hitherto prominent in the literature.

4 Discussion

This study has confirmed the findings of Barðdal (1999a), that Bybee's and Goldberg's assumptions on productivity is not valid for loan verbs, but presumably for native word formation only.

Research on the effect of Middle Low-German on Middle Scandinavian has led to the conclusion that the extensiveness of the contact can be measured by the amount of integration. The more integration of the source language's grammar on the recipient language, the more intensive and extensive must the contact have been (see Wessén 1929:271 and 1992:26-27; Törnqvist 1955:106). My examples invalidate that view. I have shown that the grammar of the source language can very easily be integrated in the grammar of the recipient language without the contact having been particularly extensive.^{8 9}

⁸ I quote Óskarsson (in prep:12):

(i) En massiv udenlandsk indflydelse som den middelnedertyske i Norge og Danmark, var aldrig til stede på Island.
'A massive foreign influence as the Middle Low German in Norway and Denmark was never at work in Iceland.'

⁹ Gösta Holm has pointed out to me (p.c.) that the conclusion that the Middle Low German influence on Middle Scandinavian must have been extensive is not based upon the fact that grammatical items were borrowed and integrated into the structure of the recipient language, but rather it is based upon the fact that the borrowing and integration of grammatical items and structure has been *maintained* up to now in the recipient language. To this I can only say that the *maintainance of grammatical items and structures* is also documented in Icelandic. The auxiliary *blífa* is found in Icelandic texts until modern times, the preposition *vegna*, borrowed from Middle Low German, is a respected member of prepositions of contemporary Icelandic, many adverbs borrowed during the middle ages are still prominent in modern Icelandic, and the adv/demonstrative *sodan/svona* (such) is a part of spoken Icelandic.

I have also shown here that a language with a full fledged and functioning morphological case system does not have any problems with integrating loan verbs and their case inflected arguments, which heavily undermines the reliability of the view that the break down of the case system in Scandinavian was caused or influenced by the contact with Middle Low German (see Haugen 1976:313, Hyldgaard-Jensen 1987:19, Jahr 1995:11-13).¹⁰ On the other hand, a study of language attrition (Baldursdóttir 1985) of an Icelandic child exposed to English has revealed that if inflectional categories are unstable (as for instance during language acquisition periods) contact with another language can function as a triggering factor in the loss (or lack of establishment) of the inflection. If we want to draw any parallels with the Middle Scandinavian situation, we have to assume that the inflectional foundation, for some reason or another, was weak.

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¹⁰ Independent evidence against that view, and for an inner change, is provided by Ringgård (1986).